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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/101, inter alia, the General Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region; and encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 23 February 2007 was sent to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, the Governments of Algeria, Chile, Iraq and Morocco have replied, and their responses are contained in section II below. Any replies received subsequently will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[26 June 2007]

1. Algeria is pleased to note the prevailing consensus within the General Assembly concerning the resolution on "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" which, along with the Barcelona Declaration of 28 November 1995, constitutes one of the few consensual reference documents on peace and security for the Mediterranean region.

2. Through its regular and sustained introduction of such a resolution, Algeria contributes to efforts to turn the Euro-Mediterranean basin into an area of peace and stability and demonstrates its unfailing attachment to the promotion of cooperation and solidarity in the region.

3. Accordingly, Algeria cannot but welcome the international community's espousal of the concept of collective security, currently shared by all States and by regional and international organizations. Algeria is convinced that the growing interest shown in this concept in various forums unquestionably lends weight to efforts to promote closer ties between peoples and establish peace and security through dialogue and mutual consultation.

4. The communal fate of the Mediterranean peoples has made it necessary and appropriate for them to pursue a dialogue that has steadily become deeper through an increasing number of shared initiatives designed to establish frameworks for concerted action between the two shores of the Mediterranean. These include the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Mediterranean Forum, the "Five plus Five" framework and the Mediterranean Dialogue of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Such initiatives in fact bear witness to a growing awareness of the close link between security in Europe and security and stability in the Mediterranean region.

5. Because security in Europe is intrinsically bound up with security in the Mediterranean region, we consider that the latter necessarily depends on security and stability on its southern shore. We are therefore convinced that any discussion of the future of the system of security in the European region must include the Mediterranean dimension and be premised on the indivisible character of security, which alone can safeguard the legitimate interests of all concerned in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

6. Algeria considers that the issue of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region must be addressed within a comprehensive framework, taking into account the political, security, economic and human interests and concerns of countries on both shores. Such an approach should reflect the Euro-Mediterranean States' respect for the principles of the sovereignty of States, their independence and territorial integrity, as well as the right to self-determination of the peoples in the region, just as it must imply full support for the principles of non-interference, non-intervention and renunciation of the threat or use of force, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

7. From this point of view, it is necessary for the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to conduct policies designed not to confirm the divide between the North and the South but to promote solidarity in ways that can help to narrow the economic and social gaps between the two shores. This challenge faces all the countries of the region without exception, and they must take it up in a positive spirit of solidarity and openness.

8. Viewed from this angle, the ambitious project of creating a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area must not be restricted to the free flow of goods and services, but must seek to prevent any further accentuation of the asymmetry that exists in the development of the northern and southern parts of the Mediterranean region. It should be gradually strengthened by the movement of persons and human exchanges, on the understanding that the ultimate goal of this undertaking is the advancement and all-round development of human beings.

9. The greatest threat to security in the region lies primarily in the worrying rise in inequalities between the two shores of the Mediterranean. So long as exclusion and marginalization affect entire segments of society on the southern shore, made

more vulnerable by the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes, free trade can hardly be expected to lead to the creation of shared prosperity, unless there is active cooperation in finding credible solutions to the key questions of development.

10. In the context of globalization, the countries of the southern shore had nourished the hope that growth and development would proceed at the same pace, provided that they made numerous sacrifices by way of painful adjustments and acceptance of unbearable social repercussions. They note today that the development gap between the North and the South continues to widen, triggering numerous spin-off phenomena such as rural exodus, migrations, violence and intolerance.

Chile

[Original: Spanish]
[13 June 2007]

1. We agree that security in the Mediterranean is linked to European security and that the latter, in turn, is linked to international peace and security. In that context we support the efforts of the countries in that region to find solutions to their problems by peaceful means.

2. We join in the appeal to the Mediterranean States to adhere to all the instruments related to disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region.

Iraq

[Original: English]
[19 March 2007]

In view of Iraq's geographical situation and of its good political and economic relationship with the States of the Mediterranean region, Iraq supports all means of strengthening security and cooperation in the region. We would like to take this opportunity to mention that His Excellency the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs participated as a guest in the last Euro-Mediterranean Summit, held in Barcelona, Spain, on 27 and 28 November 2005.

Morocco

[Original: French]
[19 June 2007]

1. Morocco reaffirms that it is committed to the objectives of peace, stability and security in the Mediterranean region, and reiterates its call to all Mediterranean States to help achieve these strategic objectives and to promote political, economic, cultural and security cooperation as a channel of peace and stability in this sensitive region of the globe.

2. The Mediterranean is obviously not a homogenous area because of its economic disparities, its cultural differences and its political and military contrasts. Nevertheless, the overlap between problems of an economic, social, environmental and human nature requires that security be established in and around the vicinity through the kind of multisectoral cooperation that can once again make the Mediterranean the zone of peaceful exchanges it was originally intended to be.

3. The thinking and political action needed to build an area of common security linking Europe to the Mediterranean region, taking into account all the factors that make the peoples of the region so insecure, requires an overall approach to security that is multidimensional in nature and involves concerted action.

4. Indeed, the dangers facing most of the Mediterranean countries stem from the cumulative impact of the underdevelopment and the economic and political impasses weighing upon their stability, present and future.

5. The Millennium Development Goal commitments offer a new dynamic for reversing the decline in human development indicators and a chance that must be seized to eradicate poverty, improve the living conditions of the peoples of the southern shores of the Mediterranean, limit illegal immigration, and eradicate the spreading of transnational crime and illicit arms trafficking that are undermining the security of the people and the stability of the whole region.

6. Morocco, aware of its responsibilities as an active participant in the international political scene, is committed to promoting non-proliferation and disarmament by acceding and conforming to international and regional non-proliferation regimes and to arms limitation and disarmament agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Inhumane Weapons Convention and two of its Protocols and The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

7. Morocco's efforts and its undertaking to promote non-proliferation and disarmament have led the international community to assign it many responsibilities in this field, namely, its election to the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors (2006-2008); its chairmanship of meetings on The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles (2006-2007); its chairmanship of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, during which it played a constructive consensus-building role and presided over the 2004 adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism; its vice-chairmanship of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee) of the General Assembly in 2005, in which it worked towards the adoption of an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace small arms and light weapons; and its presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (2004).

8. Strengthening confidence-building measures in the Mediterranean region necessarily requires strengthening dialogue, cooperation and consultation on regional issues and active solidarity between both sides of the Mediterranean.

9. In that context, Morocco is working tirelessly to enrich the conceptual framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations, to enhance its structures and mechanisms and to optimize its programmes. The rich and global framework for cooperation provided by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the content of which is multidimensional and diversified, could be strengthened and optimized for the

benefit of the countries around the Mediterranean by allocating the resources and means necessary for achieving the common goals.

10. The 5+5 Dialogue is an edifying structure and a mechanism designed to generate confidence-building measures between North and South and especially between South and South. In the latter case, it should make it possible to overcome the difficulties of subregional dialogue. It is effective insofar as it produces concrete projects, relating, inter alia to fighting terrorism, maritime surveillance, aviation security and civil defence of interest to States or both sides of the Mediterranean.

11. The contours of the future development of this Dialogue should, in Morocco's view, focus on adequacy of security agendas on both sides of the Mediterranean, adoption of a multidimensional approach to security covering all the challenges and threats facing the region, equal and balanced treatment of all the problems and challenges to regional security and identification of new operational synergies that could contribute to achievement of the goals of that Dialogue.

12. The Mediterranean approach taken by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) contributes to the Mediterranean Dialogue by its practical and specific dimension. Morocco has evaluated its experience of the support it gives to NATO-led operations in the Balkans. Accordingly, it can recommend several practical ways of improving North-South cooperation, inter alia in the area of disaster relief assistance and maritime cooperation in the military and civilian areas.

13. Morocco has participated in the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR), the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the current EUFOR-Operation ALTHEA (European Union-led peacekeeping force), thereby demonstrating that Morocco is a valuable partner of NATO and of the European security and defence policy. This military cooperation is a significant contribution to the efforts that the Kingdom of Morocco is making to maintain peace and security in the Mediterranean.

14. In an innovative and participatory approach intended to enhance the dynamics of the Dialogue, on 7 April 2006, Morocco hosted the first meeting of the NATO North Atlantic Council with the seven countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This high-level meeting was a follow-up to the recommendation made at the Istanbul Summit in 2004 concerning the broadening and expansion of the Mediterranean Dialogue so as to combine strengthening of political consultation with intensification of practical cooperation with a view to dealing with all problems and challenges to regional security.

15. In an attempt to intensify Euro-Mediterranean cooperation Morocco hosted, on 8 and 9 September 2005, the eleventh seminar of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the latter, instead of confining itself to the security approach that had prevailed for years, focused on the human and economic dimensions, thereby marking a qualitative shift in bilateral cooperation between OSCE and its partners south of the Mediterranean.

16. Positive proposals were made on how to turn migration into a factor of economic development, how to strengthen the Mediterranean partnership so as to combat illegal migration, how to safeguard migrants' rights while clarifying their duties and how to implement effective integration policies, thereby demonstrating that both shores of the Mediterranean have a common interest in turning this into a

dynamic process that will promote security, stability and development in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

17. It is in that spirit and in order to boost the dynamics of that North-South dialogue that Morocco hosted the Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat on 10 and 11 July 2006; the purpose of that Conference was to help European and African partners work out lasting solutions to the challenge of migration. The Conference, the first of its type to offer a framework of consultation to senior officials from the countries of origin, transit and destination, was attended by representatives of 30 European States and 28 African States and led to the adoption of a political declaration and plan of action dealing with three issues that are fundamental for regulating migration: promotion of development, inter alia by establishing financial instruments to encourage co-development and developing knowledge and know-how; facilitation of legal migration by establishing cooperation programmes; and, lastly, countering of illegal migration by strengthening national border controls in countries of origin and transit, operational cooperation between police and the judiciary, assistance to victims, funding mechanisms and institutional framework for such actions.

18. Morocco, believing in the concept of the indivisibility of security, reiterates the need to expand the circle of Euro-Mediterranean solidarity towards other regions, especially Africa, which suffers from poverty, instability and disease, all of which foster conditions conducive to insecurity such as migration, refugee flows, illicit trafficking of arms, drugs and people, and transnational crime. That concept of "security for all" favours the adoption of a global, mutually agreed approach in the service of peace and security and based on responsibility shared between the countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

19. Morocco reaffirms that the only way to achieve comprehensive and effective security in the Mediterranean region is by holding discussions on three levels, national, regional and international. It should be noted that the approach taken by Morocco is similar to that taken by its European partners; both are based on the concept of comprehensive security, combining concern for security with humanitarian concerns.

20. Accordingly, Morocco calls for renewed, strengthened and strong commitment in the context of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach based on shared responsibility and mutual trust and resolutely turned towards uniting efforts so as to ensure that account is taken of all the challenges to common security.

21. Socio-economic development and strengthening of democracy are key words in the pursuit of the goals of peace and security in the Mediterranean region for, in the present context, a State whose sovereignty is respected and whose territorial integrity is preserved is most likely to be able to guarantee the safety of its people and of its neighbours.

22. Implementation of the Agadir regional agreement on free trade will doubtless mark an important step towards increasing prosperity and enhancing regional integration. Creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area — which is scheduled for 2010 — is becoming increasingly necessary.

23. The appearance of new global threats, such as terrorism, demand a multiplication of efforts to promote concerted and tight cooperation so as to respond appropriately to these challenges.

24. Morocco has itself been the target of several terrorist attacks and it is convinced that the same threat looms over all the members of the international community. Its actions to combat terrorism are three-dimensional: national, regional and international. It has acceded to the conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, has adopted a national law against terrorism and has collaborated closely with the Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

25. Given the complex nature and mobility of terrorism, which scoffs at borders and national identities, it is essential to switch from the framework of action outlined at the global level to a stronger and more appropriate regional approach. This subregional dimension could be based on the experience of the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue (inter alia the 5+5 Dialogue) and take greater account of the experience of the various countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, which have long been faced with the rise of hateful radicalism and have acquired expertise that should be tapped for this struggle.

26. Strengthened cooperation between Morocco and its Mediterranean neighbours, which led to the signing of a declaration at Nice, at the twelfth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries (Algeria, France, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia), has increased cooperation as regards terrorism, the fight against organized crime, immigration and civil defence.

27. This strengthened cooperation is demonstrated by the conclusion of several bilateral agreements on security against terrorism and organized crime with countries around the Mediterranean, including Egypt, France, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Spain. Other draft agreements are also being negotiated with Portugal and Turkey.

28. In addition, in May 2006, the French and Moroccan Ministries of the Interior signed a bilateral agreement concerning forensics, and the national parliament adopted Act. No. 43-05 on money-laundering. Article 38 of that Act provides for the freezing of assets of any person suspected of ties to a terrorist enterprise, which task is to be carried out by the yet-to-be created "financial intelligence unit", thereby dealing with the anomaly pointed out by the Counter-Terrorism Committee during its mission to Morocco in 2003.

29. At the operational level, Morocco has made significant advances as regards combating drug trafficking, particularly as regards cannabis. These efforts have been welcomed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in a document entitled "2006 World Drug Report" published in February 2007. Operational cooperation between Algeria, France, Morocco and Spain in the fight against terrorism has resulted in the dismantling of several terrorism networks in Morocco.

30. Morocco has also begun strengthening police cooperation by extending and sharing the network of liaison officers with France and Spain, setting up joint brigades (Gendarmerie Royale/Guardia Civil) to monitor the maritime borders, thereby reducing the number of migrants arriving on Spanish soil by more than 50 per cent, and has exchanged experts and training, inter alia on biological and nuclear terrorism, with its partners.

31. Morocco would like to draw attention to the need felt by the security services of countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean to be brought up to speed as regards personnel training and technological equipment in order to be able to deal with the new challenges posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime. Technical assistance such as that provided for in the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is needed.

32. Given that the Sahelo-Saharan strip — an area which is known for arms trafficking and absence of border checks and which is therefore an ideal place for terrorist networks — causes it to be concerned about security, Morocco is committed to the fight with its strategic allies and it is open to constructive initiatives to develop that poor region and to promote stability in the entire Maghreb region. The Pan-Sahel Initiative — which provides technical assistance to the security forces of the Maghreb countries — the Flintlock exercise — which seeks to counter terrorism and crime conducted across borders, the Medshark/Majestic Eagle '04 exercise overseen by NATO, the Trans-Sahel Counter-Terrorism Initiative, which provides for a five-year programme of military, anti-terrorist and good governance assistance, are all programmes that contribute to the fight against terrorism.

33. Given the efforts it is known to have made in this area, Morocco was chosen to host the first meeting, in October 2006, of the Global Initiative to Counter Terrorism, the purpose of which was to establish a network of partner nations to avert and combat nuclear terrorism.

34. The meeting adopted two main documents, a declaration and terms of reference, which emphasize the main goals of the Initiative, namely, to improve accounting and security of nuclear and radioactive materials and enhance the security of nuclear facilities with a view to forestalling nuclear terrorist activities. The goal is also to promote information-sharing and assistance in the event of an incident, to commit not to grant safe haven to terrorists planning nuclear attacks and to organize seminars on related topics.

35. Morocco calls for the expansion of this initiative, which is notable for its pragmatic and operational approach and for being based on the existing international legal framework and is therefore an effective and appropriate contribution to the efforts to combat nuclear terrorism and an appropriate way to strengthen cooperation among States in this area.

36. Combating terrorism also requires the establishment of a lasting peace and the reduction of sources of tension. That is one aspect of Morocco's strategic commitment to building a united Maghreb on sound bases as a means of promoting stability in the region.

37. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a key to stability in the region. It underscores the erratic way in which the international community has acted and the latter's inability to impose a just and lasting settlement of the conflict. Failure to find a settlement is fuelling extremism and the terrorist aspirations that go along with it.

38. In light of these threats and challenges, security and stability seem both a common good that should be preserved and a strategic goal to be pursued. Accordingly, Morocco and its Mediterranean partners owe it to themselves to remain vigilant and jointly committed to the common fight to eradicate the roots of terrorism and to eliminate its structures.